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Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 13311 111048Z

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: JA PFOR PINT
SUBJ: PRESEDENTIAL VISIT BACKGROUND, PAPER XIV: JAPANESE
MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION

1. THE MAJOR JAPANESE MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS ARE LARGE, TECH-
NOLOGICALLY ADVANCED, AND HIGHLY CENTRALIZED. HUGE STAFFS
ALLOW MASSIVE COVERAGE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS, SUCH AS STATE
VISITS. THE JAPANESE MEDIA EXPECT AND USUALLY GET SPECIAL
TREATMENT FROM JAPANESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES.

SELF-IMAGE AND ROLE IN SOCIETY

2. THE MEDIA VIEW THEMSELVES AS THE WATCHDOGS OF THE JAPANESE
GOVERNMENT AND FEEL OBLIGED TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR POLITICALLY
INDEPENDENT ROLE THROUGH CONSTANT MONITORING, PRODDING AND
CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT. ANTICIPATED CRITICISM IN THE
MEDIA SERVES AS AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC OPINION BRAKE ON GOV-
ERNMENT ACTIONS. THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT, CONSTANTLY ON THE
DEFENSIVE ON ALL FRONTS, WILL RARELY TAKE, A STRONG PUBLIC
POSITION IN SUPPORT OF CONTROVERSIAL AMERICAN POLICIES, EVEN
WHEN IT PRIBVATELY ENDORSES AND SHARES THOSE POLICIES. YET
THE MEDIA PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN JAPNAESE CONSENSUS-MAKING--
REPRESENTING AND STIMULATING PUBLIC OPINION, ORIGINATING AND
REFINING IDEAS, AND SERVING AS TH MAJOR CONDUIT FOR OFFICIAL
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LEAKS AND TRIAL BALLOONS. THIS ROLE IS FACILITIATED BY THE CLOSE,

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FREQUENT AND MUTUALLY-INFLUENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS WHICH
DEVELOP BETWEEN LEADERS AND MEDIA PERSONNEL, PARTICULARLY
REPORTERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE EXCLUSIVE PRESS CLUBS AT
EACH MINISTRY, POLITICAL PARTY AND BUSINESSS ORGANIZATION.

POLITICAL STANCE

3. THE PLLITICAL SPECTRUM REPRESENTED BY MAJOR NON-COMMUNIST
PAPERS RUNS FROM MODERATELY CONSERVATIVE/BUSINESS-ORIENTED
TO LEFTIST/INTELLECTUAL. THEY AIM AT A BOARD AND VARIED
CLIENTELE, AND THERE SIS NO OBVIOUS AFFILIATION WITH OR
SUPPORT OF PARTICULAR POLITICAL PARTIES OR FACTIONS. THE
COMMUNIST PARTY'S NEWSPAER, AKAHATA (RED FLAG), HAS ALSO IN
RECENT YEARS ACHIEVED A SIGNIFICANT GENERAL AUDIENCE AND A
CERTAIN REPUTATION FOR SHARP AND ACCURATE JOURNALISM, BUT
ITS OBVIOUS POLITIFAL CANT AND DIRECT CONTROL BY THE PARTY
PUT IT IN ASPECIAL CATEGORY.
COVERAGE OF U.S.

4. COVERAGE OF THE UNITED STATES IS BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY
ON REPORTS FROM THE LARGE JAPANESE PRESS CORPS IN THE U.S.
THIS COVERAGE IS EXTENSIVE BUT SUPERFICIAL. IT REFLECTS
A LACK OF CONTACT WITH OFFICIIAL U.S. SPOKESMAN, A PRE-
OCCUPATION WITH WASHINGTON POLITICS AND NEW YORK FINANCE,
AND LITTLE REAL UNDERSTANDING OF OR INTEREST IN AMERICAN
SOCEITTY.

ATTITUDES OF U.S. POLICY

5. THE MAOR MEDIA ACCEPT A CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE BUT
NOT A SUBORDINATE JAPANESE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. BUT
GIVEN THE MEDIA'S PENCHANT FOR CRITICIZING THE GOJ, ATTACKS
ON JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY INEVITABLY ENCOMPASS CRITICISM OF
THE POLICY OF THER CLOSEST ALLY, THE U.S. A DEEP-SEATED
JAPANESE ARRANGEMENTS A FREQUENT TARGET. DOUBTS REMAIN ABOUT
THE NEED FOR THE SECURITY TREATY IN AN ERA OF DETENTE, BUT
THERE ARE NO LONGER OUTRIGHT CALLS FOR ITS EARLY ABROGATION.
THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT CONSIDERABLE SCALING DOWN OF
THE U.S. BASE STRUCTURE IN JAPAN IS DESIRABLE. THE MEDIA
HAVE GENERALLY WELCMED U.S. EFFORTS TOWARD DETENTE. BUT
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WHILE THEY APPRECIATE THE INCREASED DIPLOMITIC FLEXIBILITY
DETENT GIVES JAPAN, THEY REFLECT A RELUCTANCE TO SEE JAPAN
PLACED IN THE MIDDLE OF INTERNATONAL CONFRONTATIONS. THE
MEDIA HAVE REACTED MORE POSITIVELY TO U.S. INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC POLICY IN RECENT YEARS, EXCEPT WHEN IT APPEARS
INIMICAL TO JAPAN'S SPECIAL NEEDS -- I.E. OIL, SOYBEANS,
FISH, ETC.
OUR DEALINGS WITH MEDIA

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6. ALTHOUGH JAPANESE NEWSWRITTINGS IS GENERALLY TENDENTIOUS, PROBLEMS WITH FACTUAL ACCURACY OR MISUNDERSTANDING OF GROUND-RULES GENERALLY HAVE ARISEN ONLY WHEN THE SOLE VERSION OF CLOSED BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS IS THAT PUT OUT BY THE JAPANESE SIDE OR WHEN WE HAVE FAILED TO ESTABLISH PRESS GUIDLINES BEFORE LEAVING SUCH DISCUSSIONS. THE JAPANESE MEDIA ARE READY TO LISTEN TO TOP AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND SPOKESMAN. GIVEN THE GOJ'S INABILITY TO DEFEND MANY OF OUR COMMON POLICIES, IT BECOMES HIGHLY IMPORTANT FOR AMERICANS TO TALK DIRECTLY AND FORTHRIGHTLY WITH THE JAPANESE MEDIA.

7. THOSE ACCUSTOMED TO ADVERSARY JOURNALISM WILL FIND FEW SURPRISES IN THE CRITICAL FLAVOR OF THE JAPANESE PRESS.. THOUGH IN GENERAL THE CRITICISM IS A BIT LESS PENETRATING, IT MAY ACUTALLY HAVE SOMEWHAT GREATER INFLUENCE ON THE CONSENSUS-CONSICIOUS POLICY MAKERS IN THE GOVERNMENT.
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